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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000534

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SE GRATION'S MEETING WITH GNU VICE PRESIDENT ALI OSMAN TAHA

REF: A. KHARTOUM 533

- [1B.](#) KHARTOUM 485
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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Alberto Fernandez, reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary: Hours before boarding a plane back to the US, the President's Special Envoy to Sudan, General Gration, met with Government of National Unity (GNU) Vice President Ali Osman Taha in the VP's home on April 10. SE Gration shared his impressions of Sudan and the challenges it faces based on observations during his nine-day visit. Taha told the SE that the Sudanese people and the Government of Sudan (GoS) welcome the SE and the Obama Administration and pledged to help the SE in his mission to Sudan. Taha touched upon the GoS, sore spot of many broken US commitments in Sudan and stated that the new US Administration must work hard to restore its lost credibility not only in Sudan, but in many other places in the Arab and African world. He expressed hope that the Obama Administration would indeed bring much-needed &change8 to the US-Sudan relationship. He acknowledged the agreement reached by SE Gration and top NCP officials on April 10 on restoring vital humanitarian and peace aid to Darfur and the Three Areas. Vice President Taha concluded the meeting by stating that he hoped the SE would bring &clear milestones and markings8 on his next trip that would chart the course for positive progress on the CPA, Darfur, and the bilateral relationship. End Summary.

[¶2.](#) (C) Following three days of intensive negotiations with high-level National Congress Party (NCP) officials on how to improve the humanitarian situation and restore much-needed humanitarian and peace aid to Darfur and the Three Areas (septel), SE Gration met with Government of National Unity (GNU) Vice President Ali Osman Taha at his home on the evening of April 10. A relaxed and welcoming Taha commented that the SE had been engaged in a &very intensive visit8 and asked SE Gration for his impressions of Sudan. SE Gration stated that he had come to Sudan with no preconceived notions or illusions. His first visit, which the SE had described in earlier GNU meetings as a &looking and listening tour,8 allowed him to gather his own impressions and build a framework for US-Sudan relations. After this week, &I have a much better understanding of what is important, what needs to be delivered, and where we need to

go,8 SE Gration told Taha. He thanked the VP for his government,s willingness to remove a &big boulder8 in the current US-Sudan relationship during his first visit ) that of resolving the INGO expulsion crisis of March 4 in a way that addresses the humanitarian gap.

¶3. (C) &We appreciate your mission and that you have come to Sudan to discuss with the Government of Sudan and the Sudanese people a way forward for a better relationship between our two countries,8 Taha told SE Gration. You have been clear in identifying the challenges, but now it is a question of credibility, he said. Taha reiterated what several other GNU officials stated in their first meetings with SE Gration -) that the US made many commitments to &help over the years and set the stage for a better, more balanced (bilateral) relationship,8 but never followed through. &We know your background and we know that the Obama Administration is working towards change,8 but the US will have to work hard to regain the credibility that it has lost, said Taha. The credibility of the US largely diminished across the Muslim world, in Sudan, and in Africa over the last eight years, and the end result is that the US now has a &sour relationship8 with most parts of the world,8 he stated. &We do believe that there is an opportunity with the new US administration to change the negative image of Sudan in the US and to try to have a better relationship,8 said Taha. That being said, &we also believe that this is our country to live in we are the masters of our own destinies. If someone is coming to Sudan to help, this (concept of sovereignty) must be understood,8 he added. Sudan looks forward to having a more &peaceful global village;8 one that can be a &real support to

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humanity.8 This is why we are making it a point to help you in your mission, Taha told SE Gration. &You are welcome here; the new US Administration is welcome here.8 For all of the differences Sudanese people have with the USG and its policies, they have no hostility towards Americans, said Taha.

¶4. (C) We endorse what we have agreed to with you, said Taha, referring to the USG-GoS agreement to restore humanitarian and peace aid to Darfur and the Three Areas made on 10 April (septel). &We hope that this will be a positive working relationship and that many things can be straightened and directed towards a positive end, whether it be the CPA, Darfur, or other things,8 continued the Vice President. We hope that on your next visit you will bring &clear milestones8 and markings to move the US-GoS relationship forward so that we can &start afresh, turn a new page, and look for a more promising relationship,8 he said. SE Gration responded that the US and Sudan have &shared responsibilities.8 General Gration reiterated that the US would respect Sudan,s sovereignty and said that he was confident that Sudan will be a good host. &I appreciate what you have said and I respect it,8 SE Gration told Taha. We will continue to build a relationship over time and I hope that we will be able to increasingly build it on trust, said General Gration. The US would like to turn Sudan into a &strong reliable partner.8 A strong, peaceful Sudan is a benefit for all of Africa and the world, concluded SE Gration.

¶5. (C) Comment: Having had nine days to size up and feel out President Obama,s Special Envoy to Sudan, the GoS saved their most high-profile and symbolic meeting with the SE for last. GNU Vice President Taha,s meeting with SE Gration, which remained &to be confirmed8 until just hours before General Gration departed Sudan, was a cautious acknowledgement by the GoS that the trip had been a success and that the GoS is hoping to work constructively with the new US Administration. Taha,s comments to SE Gration were carefully balanced. While he welcomed the SE on behalf of the GoS and the Sudanese people and expressed support for his mission, he reminded the SE of broken past USG promises (some of which the Bush Administration made directly and personally

to Taha himself) and indicated that the GoS would not accept violations of Sudanese sovereignty. VP Taha briefly alluded to the agreement reached earlier that day between SE Gration and top NCP officials (on behalf of the GNU) to restore humanitarian and peace aid to Darfur and the Three Areas, but was clear in pointing out that the GoS expects a clearer and more detailed picture from the Obama Administration on where it intends to go on the US-Gos relationship during SE Gration,s next visit to Sudan. While some in the regime have rejected the notion of a roadmap tying normalized relations to actions on the part of the Sudanese, VP Taha,s reference to &clear milestones8 appeared to indicate a recognition that this is inevitable. End Comment.

FERNANDEZ